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Fostering Resilience in Emancipating Foster Care Youth

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MSW Clinical Research Paper

Presented to the Faculty of the School of Social Work

St. Catherine University and University of St. Thomas

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The Clinical Research Project is a graduation requirement for MSW students at St. Catherine University/ University of St. Thomas School of Social Work in St. Paul, Minnesota and is conducted within a nine-month time frame to demonstrate facility with basic social research methods. Students must individually conceptualize a research problem, formulate a research design that is approved by a research committee and the University Institutional Review Board, implement the project, and publicly present the findings of the study. This project is neither a Master's thesis nor a dissertation.

Abstract

Compared to general population emerging adults, youth who are transitioning out of foster care into independent living tend to experience a higher percentage of long-term negative outcomes including disorganized relationships, chemical dependency, and insecure housing and employment. The researcher identified fifteen articles that explored programs' and practitioners' work with foster care youth transitioning to independence. This exploratory study evaluated the programs' intervention modalities and philosophies through a systematic review. The findings identified three common interventions: Resource coordination, Social connections, and Independent living skills instruction; and four primary program philosophies: Relationship-based model, Youth development model, Integrative model, and Systems of care approach. These themes relate to the findings in the literature in an analogous 'parts to a whole' relationship. The literature identifies contributing factors to resilience in emancipating foster care youth, while the findings of the research signify the effectiveness of modalities and philosophies that utilize a whole-person approach to working with this vulnerable population. Implications to social work practice, policy, and continuing research are discussed.

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Fostering Resilience in Emancipating Foster Care Youth

Introduction

Currently, emerging adults in the general population of the United States are experiencing unprecedented difficulties in transitioning from adolescence to adulthood (Wade and Dixon, 2006). This difficulty in transition is exacerbated for youth emancipating from foster care who have suffered the adverse effects of multiple changes in their environments, unstable housing, and childhood trauma (Barnow, Buck, O'Brien, Pecora, Ellis, and Steiner, 2015).

For the purpose of this study, the individual's transition to adulthood is defined by the cessation of familial economic support and the attainment of independent living. The national average rate of employment for young adults aged 20-24 is 67%, where the average rate of employment specifically for foster care alumni of the same age is a mere 52% (Barnow, et al., 2015). Data from the 2005 census recorded that the average age for youth to leave the parental home was 23; much later than the federal expectation for foster children to transition to independent living at the age of 18 (Jones, 2013). According to a national survey, 54% of foster alumni returned to their biological parent's home after emancipation from the foster care system (Jones, 2013). Recent advocacy initiatives have called for the delay in foster youths' transitions from care to independence from the current age of 18 until the age of 24 (Wade and Dixon, 2006). According to a longitudinal study of children raised to adulthood in foster care, findings concluded that the youth would continue to need support into their young adult years. This is consistent with the increasing evidence that suggests general population young adults are also dependent upon familial support into their mid-twenties (Schoffield and Beek, 2009; Stein, 2006).

Long-term results for former foster youth have been historically poor (Barnow, et al., 2015). As youth in foster care reach the age of emancipation, they are at an above average risk to face numerous difficulties in securing their basic needs (Ryan, Hernandez, and Herz, 2007). Essentials such as affordable housing, healthcare access, social connections, educational opportunities, and gainful employment are difficult for these youth to grasp. Studies have recorded a correlation between time spent in foster care and lower levels of educational attainment (Wade and Dixon, 2006). While many of these children enter care with educational deficits, there are statistically few programs that promote significant gains in education for foster youth. This, in turn, leads to the array of negative outcomes that have been documented for youth exiting the foster care system (Ryan, et al., 2007).

History of Negative Outcomes

The negative outcomes that have long been observed in emancipated foster care youth have been measured and researched, and include insecure relationships, substance abuse problems, truancy, and unstable employment (Reilly, 2003). Data support the claim that the absence of school enrollment in many former foster youth increased the risk that these youth would embark on a trajectory of offense in the legal system (Ryan, et al., 2007). According to a study into the demographics of Native American children in foster care, it was concluded that the youth in care have significant barriers in sustaining long-term relationships due to frequent changes in living arrangements and separation from their cultural heritage (Gilgun, 2002). Furthermore, crime rates were proven to be higher amongst youth who had unstable foster placements (Reilly, 2003). While the hypothesized factor of substance abuse did not show a correlation with subsequent criminal offenses (Ryan et al., 2007), substance abuse did contribute to lower rates of employability and housing opportunity (Wade and Dixon, 2006).

Emerging Research

There is an increase in demand for new research regarding the effectiveness of certain strategies such as adoption, kinship care, and neighborhood foster care programs (Harris, Jackson, O'Brien, and Pecora, 2009). Additionally, specific research into the role of talent and interest mentors has shown positive correlations with promoting resilience (Gilligan, 1999). While current initiatives in the United States foster system are striving to reduce the number of children placed in out of home care and emphasize swift family reunifications, many children remain in the system for large portions of their childhood (Barnow, et al., 2015). In order for the developmental needs of foster children and emerging adults to be met, more research is needed to discover how to reduce the psychosocial risk that a long-term foster arrangement can have on children (Schofield and Beek, 2005). The proposed systematic review will identify and evaluate the reported successes of available programs and interventions and to determine what the ideal role of a social worker would be in promoting resilience in emancipating foster care youth.

Literature Review

Promoting Resilience

Along with the negative outcomes associated with youth leaving foster care that have been presented above, there are also protective factors that promote resilience amongst these adolescents. The theory of resilience provides social workers with a framework to conceptualize the reasons that some children continue to prosper after experiencing adverse early experiences while others do not (Schofield and Beek, 2005). Resilience, by definition, is the ability of an individual to adapt positively despite severe adversities (Flynn, 2004). The presence of resilience can be measured differently by each individual, but for the sake of this research it will be measured by attainment of healthy relationships, livable wage employment, and access to educational opportunities. A thorough understanding of resilience can aid social workers in prescribing targeted interventions in order to promote healthy transitions to adulthood (Schofield and Beek, 2005). Research has shown that some contributing factors to positive outcomes for foster care alumni include positive social connections, support in career planning, and educational opportunities.

Positive Social Connections

Stable placements and attachment. Research into the experience of former foster care youth has shown that stability and types of placements can have a great impact on the child's development (Harris, et al., 2009). Attachment theory is a complementary framework to the study of resilience in foster youth (Schofield and Beek, 2005). The similarities between resilience and attachment include the fact that both can be defined by positive interactions in interpersonal relationships (Birneanu, 2014). While placement changes have been shown to have

a negative impact on attachment styles of foster youth, stable foster care placements can provide a buffer between the child and their adverse life experiences (Jones, 2013). Another compatible theory to the attachment and resilience frameworks is the theory of *social capital* which alludes to the strength that a sense of belonging to a social network can build in youth (Pinkerton and Dolan, 2007).

Due to the nature of their early life experiences, many foster care youth bring an insecure attachment style to the relationship with their foster families as well (Birneanu, 2014). Primary steps for improving attachment style would be observation of interactions and implementation of therapeutic techniques (Stein, 2005). By building positive, stable relationships with their foster children, foster families can contribute to the resilience of these children (Birneanu, 2014). Developing a positive self-esteem is largely contingent upon the ability to construct healthy, secure attachments. A secure attachment would be depicted by emotional regulation in transactions between youth and their caregivers and peers. A healthy attachment style would produce adaptive behaviors in response to stress-inducing life circumstances in the effort to maintain emotional homeostasis. (Gilgun, 2002).

Supports. As a result of the change in transition patterns from adolescence to adulthood, the familial support system is increasingly important. If this support is lacking, the result can often lead to disaster for the protracted adolescent. Extra-familial support, such as foster care providers, social service programs, and friendships can also contribute to a sense of stability and grounding that can promote resilience in former foster youth, but for many of these youth, their support systems tend to taper off after they leave care (Wade and Dixon, 2006). Research into the realm of resilience has concluded that the presence of a non-familial adult mentor provides

foster children and adolescents with the fortitude to succeed in the face of adversity (Osterling and Hines, 2006).

While a non-familial adult and former foster youth relationship can sometimes occur organically, the phenomenon is too great of a coincidence to be completely dependable. In the absence of a naturally occurring mentorship bond, many social services are creating programs that provide volunteer mentors. Some programs offer group-based mentorship, while others provide an individual volunteer to each adolescent in the program (Osterling and Hines, 2006). The results of the research conducted by Osterling and Hines indicated that mentors promoted resilience in foster youth by modeling positive adult behaviors, developing secure relationships, and teaching important living skills (Osterling and Hines, 2006). Additionally, former foster youth have reported that continued support from their social worker and former foster parents have contributed to their success in forming new supportive relationships in their adult lives (Jones, 2013).

Support in Career Planning

Studies have shown the importance of workforce training for foster care alumni. Positive long-term outcomes were associated with improved employability. General income support, likewise, was proven to increase the overall well-being of former foster care youth as they emerged into adulthood (Barnow, et al., 2015). One form of income support is demonstrated in the independent living programs. Research has shown that emancipating foster youth who joined an independent living program had greater probability of becoming self-supporting at the end of the program when contrasted against youth who did not receive a similar intervention (Scannapieco, 1995). During a study of five foster care systems that were given a grant to fund two years of programming for emancipated foster youth, it was found that long-term

employment support services yielded a higher rate of positive achievements in employment and education (Barnow et al., 2015). In another study, university graduates with experience in foster care were compared with graduates in the general population. This study concluded that both groups had a similar rate of employment at a livable wage but differed in that the group of foster care alumni were less likely to have attained home ownership and more likely to have a combined household income below the poverty line (Salazar, 2013).

Educational Opportunities

From early childhood until well after adolescence, education is regarded as a primary need for children to grow and develop into healthy adults (Birneanu, 2014). Frequent changes in placements and school districts tend to have negative impacts on foster care youth's educational opportunities (Fernandez, 2008). Education has been shown to be a protective factor in promoting resilience in foster youth emerging into adulthood, but many barriers to education for foster youth persist today (Harris et al., 2009). According to a 2003 study, 75% of youth leaving foster care indicated that they wanted to obtain post-secondary education, although approximately half had not finished high school (Reilly, 2003). Further supports are essential in order to ensure that these foster youth have the opportunity for educational achievements. According to Fernandez (2008), "There is a need for a coordinated multidisciplinary response to address overlapping domains of need, such as education and mental health, and current policies must favor and target better health and education outcomes for children in care" (p. 1299). Additionally, increased cooperation between schools and the foster care system can be required in order to better monitor student's academic progress (Reilly, 2003).

In summary, the literature identifies some contributing factors that promote an emancipating foster youth's resilience in the transition to adulthood. The literature appears to be comprehensive in scope; however, the composite findings are fragmented. This systematic review identified and evaluated the reported successes of available programs and interventions in order to determine what the ideal role of a social worker would be in promoting resilience in emancipating foster care youth.

Methods

In order to study the process of foster care youth transitioning to adulthood, it is important to gain a broader understanding of the research literature available about the programs and interventions that are available for this population. For this reason, the research design for this study is a systematic review of programs and interventions. In this methods section, a detailed explanation of the specific inclusion criteria, search strategy, data abstraction approach, and strengths and limitations of the systematic review research design is provided.

Research Design- Systematic Review

A systematic review was the method chosen in order to identify and evaluate the reported successes of available programs and interventions and determine what the implications are for the ideal role of a social worker in promoting resilience in emancipating foster care youth. The systematic review research design is a process by which empirical research is evaluated and integrated into concise findings about a research question. The findings of a systematic review can be used to synthesize the findings of previous studies and offer implications for future research, social work practice, and social policies. Furthermore, since the inclusion criteria, search strategy, and data abstraction approach will be explained in detail, this systematic review process can be replicated in the future.

Inclusion Criteria

There are several considerations to take into account when selecting appropriate sources for inclusion in the systematic review. For the purpose of my study, I utilized a mixed method approach and accepted articles that researched program and intervention evaluations, research

that has been conducted in the past twenty years, and research that focuses specifically on foster care youth within the age range of 15-22. These requirements for the research included ensured that the findings were current and relevant to modern practice and policy implications.

Furthermore, this particular research is focused specifically on the resilience of youth during their transition from adolescence to adulthood; therefore research that includes age ranges outside of 15-22 was excluded from consideration for this project.

Search Strategy

The articles that were used in this systematic review were program evaluations and research articles focused on aspects of programs or interventions that promote resilience in foster care youth transitioning to independent living. Articles were accessed through the use of on-line databases including SocIndex and Social Work Abstracts with the permission of the University of St. Thomas. Keywords focused on the following phrases: Independent living programs, emancipating foster youth, program evaluation foster care youth. Synonyms and combinations of these terms were also used in the search process. When an article was identified by the keyword search, the article was then reviewed in order to determine its relevance and adherence to the inclusion criteria.

Data Abstraction

The information gathered from the selected articles focused on the treatment modalities utilized, and the core philosophy of the program. This information provided an understanding of each program's resilience framework. The mixed-method approach of this study provided a synthesis of the available program philosophies and treatment modalities as they are played out in the experience of the youth and their common effectiveness measures.

Strengths and Limitations

The strengths of the systematic review approach to this topic include the ability for the researcher to evaluate many programs and obtain an overview on what is currently being done in the field. Because of the comprehensive nature of systematic review research, the findings in this project are generalizable to the population at large. Furthermore, the findings have strong implications for social work practice and future research since the sample size encompasses the samples from each article that was included.

Limitations for this systematic review study include the comparability of the articles in the study. Some studies may include or exclude variables that may have additional influence on the data collected. Also, since abstract concepts such as the program's philosophy were investigated in this study, it was a challenge to compare the experiences of individuals from the programs. As a qualitative systematic review, this research explored the experience of participants, rather than determining the effectiveness of any treatment or program philosophy.

Findings

Introduction

The results of the data abstraction for the selected literature yielded common themes in interventions and program philosophies. The interventions found include resource coordination, social connections, and independent living skills instruction and the program philosophies identified include relationship-based model, youth development model, integrative model, and systems of care approach. Furthermore, a synthesis of the effectiveness measures of each modality and philosophy was also integrated in the findings. The effectiveness of interventions and program philosophies is defined in this study as those which correlate with positive outcomes in the lives of the foster care youth as they transition to independent living. Each program or study defines its own measures for success, therefore the findings cannot be considered generalizable to all other programs; however, important implications for practice, policy, and further research can still be gleaned from the findings.

Interventions

Resource coordination. One of the most prevalent intervention modalities that programs and practitioners use when working with youth emancipating from foster care centers on resource coordination. This often involves individually tailored needs assessments and the streamlining of referrals and connections to community support systems (Greeson, Garcia, Kim, and Courtney, 2015). Some examples of resource coordination include helping youth obtain identification and licenses, basic survival needs such as food and housing, childcare for youth that are parenting, and access to health and mental health care services (Crawford, et al, 2010; Osterling and Hines, 2006).

It was found through the systematic review process that programs focusing on resource procurement had mixed results in correlation with long-term positive outcomes for foster care youth (Greeson, Garcia, Kim, and Courtney, 2015; Day, Somers, Darden, and Yoon, 2014). The length of time that the youth were provided with services and assistance with resources was found to greatly impact the overall experience of positive outcomes (Barnow, et. al, 2013; Yaroni, Wetts, and Ross, 2010). Furthermore, the programs that combined the intervention modality of resource coordination with a program philosophy that was relationship and whole-person centered yielded stronger positive outcomes (Wetts, and Ross, 2010; Tao, et. al, 2012).

Social connections. Another intervention modality identified was the promotion of the social connections foster youth had with caring adults and community organizations. Social connections were found to have two primary functions: emotional support and instrumental support (Jones, 2013; Gilligan, 1999). Programs using this intervention modality often use a mentorship format and pair each youth with a staff member who meets with them regularly (Greeson, Garcia, Kim, and Courtney, 2015; Jones and Morris, 2012). Programs varied on the structure and process by which youth were paired with mentors and how much training mentor staff received (Yaroni, Wetts, and Ross, 2010). Another variation includes the use of a therapist as an attuned mentor to foster care youth (Kirven, 2000).

In the Massachusetts' Adolescent Outreach Program for Youths in Intensive Foster Care program, promoting social connections among emancipating foster care youth is the primary program goal, however; the findings from the program evaluation suggest that youth who had natural mentors in their lives fared better on the social support scale than youth who were paired with mentors in their program (Greeson, Garcia, Kim, and Courtney, 2015). In the program evaluation of The Academy Program for Older Youth Transitioning out of Foster Care, it was

found that the long-term social connections youth made within this program had a similar effect as the positive correlation with natural mentors in other studies (Yaroni, Wetts, and Ross, 2010).

Independent living skills. An additional intervention that was identified through this research was the process of teaching independent living skills to emancipating foster care youth. The goal of this intervention is to encourage self-sufficiency in foster care emerging adults. This was most often completed in a formal classroom setting, and youth were taught based on a set curriculum (Courtney, 2008; Mares and Kroner, 2011).

The effectiveness of the independent living skills was found to be moderate. The findings suggest that some amelioration of outcomes was present, but not in significant proportion to the time and resources the programs utilized (Courtney, 2008; Osterling and Hines, 2006). Despite the lack of significant improvement in outcomes with this intervention, it continues to be a focal point for many programs, policies, and procedures (Tao, et. al, 2012; Wade and Dixon, 2006). Two factors that were found to be associated with higher positive outcomes in this model were the length of time that the youth spent in the program and being older at the time of admission to the program (Mares and Kroner, 2011; Wade and Dixon, 2006).

Program Philosophy

Relationship-based model. An important aspect of many of the programs studied was a relationship-based framework. This type of philosophy emphasizes the relationship between the foster youth and a primary service provider such as a program counselor, social worker, or mentor. Further interventions in the relationship-based philosophy also center on promoting the youth's connections in his or her community and other support networks (Jones, 2013; Osterling and Hines, 2006; Gilligan, 1999).

In the case of Massachusetts' Adolescent Outreach Program, the program philosophy and its effective results were conflicting. While the outreach of this program is founded on the mentorship of youth by a caring adult, it was found that participation in the program did not ameliorate foster youth's sense of social support and community connections (Greeson, Garcia, Kim, and Courtney, 2015). The study found, however; that youth in consistent, organically occurring mentorship relationships reported reduced stress and reduced likelihood of arrest (Greeson, Garcia, Kim, and Courtney, 2015; Jones and Morris, 2012). By contrast, in the family and social networks survey conducted by Loring Jones, findings suggest that the strongest predictor for resiliency outcomes was the factor of having a relationship with an organization (2013).

Youth Development Model. This program framework emphasizes the development of independent living skills and achievement of personal development goals. Examples of independent living skills include obtaining necessary documentation, transportation, and resources (Courtney, 2008; Day, Somers, Darden, and Yoon, 2014), whereas examples of personal development goals include pursuing higher education, career training, and development of talents and recreational activities (Greeson, Garcia, Kim, and Courtney, 2015; Gilligan, 1999; Crawford, et al 2010).

The programs that use strictly this skills development and goal achievement model were found to correlate with "little improvement in outcomes among youth who age out of foster care" in regard to their social connectedness (Greeson, Garcia, Kim, and Courtney, 2015) but showed varying correlations with other positive outcomes such as enrollment in higher education and attainment of employment (Barnow, et. al, 2013; Salazar, 2013; Wade and Dixon, 2006). The intensive classroom structure, such as in the Life Skills Training Program in Los Angeles County

and the Lighthouse Independent Living Program in Ohio, was found to have limited positive effects on long-term outcomes (Courtney, 2008; Mares and Kroner, 2011).

Integrative model. The integrative model of service provision focuses on developing the whole person while also fostering a sense of social connectedness within the program. The benefits to this framework include its unique ability to “address the wide range of specialized needs of youth in care” (Yaroni, Wetts, and Ross, 2010). This can include approaches that integrate a positive world view with strengths-based therapeutic interventions (Kirven, 2000).

Programs and interventions that utilized the integrative framework showed significant improvements in long-term outcomes for their youth transitioning to independent living (Yaroni, Wetts, and Ross, 2010). It was found that the social connections built over a period of time had a positive correlation with these young adults engaging in their communities while also building the skills they needed for adult life (Yaroni, Wetts, and Ross, 2010). It was found that “a focus on accomplishment and strength can have a significant impact on the client who is removed from his/ her natural surroundings and who is carrying a poor self-image” (Kirven, 2000).

Systems of care approach. This philosophy for working with youth in foster care within the context of their broader support network is rooted in the ecological framework. The interventions in programs that utilize this philosophy are a collaborative effort between clients, their families, and the program staff. This framework “decreases fragmentation among services and bolsters the support network for youth and families” (Tao, et. al, 2013).

Results associated with the systems of care approach showed a positive correlation with long-term success outcomes (Tao, et. al, 2013). The ecological scope of this framework has the benefit of incorporating the important aspects of the youth’s life into a manageable and

predictable experience. This is theorized to promote resilience in clients whose environments had previously been disrupted or chaotic (Kirven, 2000).

Conclusion

By synthesizing the information about the programs' philosophies and intervention modalities, the findings conclude that there may be a correlation between the outlooks of the program and the outcomes for the youth. Programs that were primarily focused on interventions with skills instruction and resource coordination showed fewer positive outcomes than programs that emphasized social connections. Similarly, the programs that operate with a philosophy that incorporates an integrated approach and includes the youths' social support systems were more effective than programs that rely on fragmented mentorship and practitioner relationships with youth.

While the research supports the importance of relational, whole-person interventions for youth aging out of foster care, legislation, social policy, and youth programs typically continue to focus on the skills-building and resource coordination approaches. These pieces of the work by themselves have shown to be minimally effective, but coupling these interventions with integrated, relational approaches yielded more consistent positive outcomes.

Discussion and Implications to Social Work

The initial premise of this research was that the findings would illuminate which program philosophies or interventions have shown the highest correlation with positive outcomes for youth transitioning from foster care to independent living. The actual results, however, signify the importance of an integrated approach for this clientele. The four codified philosophies – relationship-based, youth development, integrative, and systems of care, as well as the three common intervention strategies- resource coordination, social connections, and independent living skills instruction – directly support this concept.

Since the articles and programs in this study have different parameters and variables, the findings cannot be considered absolute and generalizable to all populations. However, the synthesis of these interventions and program philosophies can contribute to the discussion of what is currently being done in social work practice with youth transitioning from foster care to independent living. In the following paragraphs the implications to social work practice, public policy, and continuing research are explored.

Social work practice. The findings in this research suggest that while there are many programs and practitioners working with the foster care emerging adult population, there is still work to be done in determining the approaches that have the most positive impact in the lives of these youth. Since it is well-documented that this is one of the most vulnerable populations in America, “caseworkers, outreach workers, and researchers must be critical of what, how, and by whom content is delivered in interventions aimed to increase social support in this vulnerable population” (Greeson, Garcia, Kim, and Courtney, 2015). Specifically, the classroom-based training has been found to be less effective than organically occurring, meaningful social

relationships with caring adults (Courtney, 2008; Gilligan, 1999). The programs and interventions that have shown to be most effective are the programs that combine an integrative and relationship-based program philosophy with youth development interventions over an extended period of time (Yaroni, Wetts, and Ross, 2010; Kirven, 2000). The provision of services at a central location offers the youth an increased chance of experiencing a reparative attachment with caring adults, which in turn, leads to improved psychosocial outcomes over a period of time (Yaroni, Wetts, and Ross, 2010).

Public policy. Currently in the realm of policy for foster care emerging adults, is the Independent Living Program (ILP; P.L. 99-272) that was created by Congress in 1986. “Undergirding this law is the belief that to stem the negative outcomes youth who emancipate from foster care experience, they must develop the life skills needed to achieve self-sufficiency, which in turn should put them on the path to long-term success” (Greeson, Garcia, Kim, and Courtney, 2015; Mares and Kroner, 2011). What the research in this systematic review suggests is that the Independent Living Programs that are strictly skills-based have shown “little improvement in outcomes among youth who age out of foster care” (Greeson, Garcia, Kim, and Courtney, 2015; Wade and Dixon, 2006).

Since there was found to be a correlation between the length of time the youth were connected to programs and positive outcomes, a policy implication would be to extend the time-frame that foster care youth may receive services (Mares and Kroner, 2011). The age at which youth are eligible for foster care services vary greatly from state to state, and range from cessation of services at age 18 to age 22. Current advocacy efforts are underway to extend the time-frame for transitional services to the age of 24 (Wade and Dixon, 2006; Yaroni, Wetts, and Ross, 2010).

Continuing research. In order to advance our understanding of program modalities and frameworks that benefit foster care youth transitioning to independent living, further research should focus on “organizational, socioecological, and provider-level factors that mediate or moderate the relationship between mentoring interventions and increased social support networks” (Greeson, Garcia, Kim, and Courtney, 2015). Furthermore, research should explore how youth are matched with services and mentors in order to increase their resilience through the difficult transition from foster care to independent living (Barnow, et. al, 2013). Additional positive outcomes can be explored through the foster care family unit, particularly in the areas of social connectedness and independent living skills development (Courtney, 2008). Studying the intersection of these systems at play in the lives of foster care youth will provide additional understanding to the role that programs and practitioners should play to support their resiliency (Tao, et. al, 2012).

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Data Abstraction Table

Author and Programs	Program Philosophy	Interventions	Measures	Sample	Findings
Greeson, Garcia, Kim, and Courtney (2015) Massachusetts' Adolescent Outreach Program for Youths in Intensive Foster Care	Relationship Based Model Youth Development Model	Resource Coordination Social Connections	Secondary data analysis measuring the effectiveness of Independent Living Skills Programs in increasing social support	194 youth in Massachusetts' intensive foster care programs aged 15-20	Programming was not effective in increasing social support
Barnow, Buck, O'Brien, Pecora, Ellis, and Steiner (2013) Transition programs	Youth Development	Resource Coordination	Quantitative survey determining types of services provided and positive outcomes experienced	1058 youth from 5 major US cities receiving services from transition programs	Entering the program at an older age and remaining in the program for a longer period of time yielded the most positive outcomes.
Salazar (2013) Casey Family Scholarship Program/ Foster Care to Success Program	Youth Development	Resource Coordination	Quantitative survey identifying correlations between levels of higher education and long-term outcomes for foster youth transitioning to adulthood	329 recipients of the Casey Family Scholarship Program or the Foster Care to Success scholarship program	While educational achievements correlated with positive economic outcomes, individuals still reported high numbers of instability in their living environments and relationships.

<p>Courtney et. al, (2008)</p> <p>Life Skills Training Program Los Angeles County, California</p>	Youth Development	Independent Living Skills	Program evaluation using a quantitative survey to identify services received by participants and their reported effectiveness	467 youths in the care of the Los Angeles County Department of Child and Family Services	Many youth reported receiving equivalent life skills training outside of the program, which may indicate the need for programs to re-evaluate the impact a classroom based training program can have on ameliorating long term outcomes for foster care youth.
<p>Yaroni, Wetts, and Ross (2010)</p> <p>The Academy for Older Youth Transitioning out of Foster Care</p>	Integrative Model	<p>Resource Coordination</p> <p>Social Connections</p>	Mixed-method program evaluation involving 23 face-to-face interviews and a quantitative survey	113 Case workers and 23 stakeholders	It was found that the integrated approach to providing services in this program increased the youth's social connectedness and correlated with long-term positive outcomes.
<p>Tao, et. al (2012).</p> <p>Another Permanent Planned Living Arrangement</p>	Systems of Care Approach	<p>Resource Coordination</p> <p>Independent Living Skills</p>	Qualitative survey designed to research factors that lead to permanency for foster care emerging adults	52 child welfare caseworkers in five county agencies working with youth in Another Permanent Planned Living Arrangement (APPLA)	It was found that this program had an overemphasis on living skills and underemphasized legal permanency
<p>Mares and Kroner (2011)</p> <p>Lighthouse Independent Living</p>	Youth Development	Independent Living Skills	Quantitative survey measuring outcomes after receipt of services in	385 emancipating foster youth participating in the Lighthouse Independent	It was found that the life skills training program had little significant impact on long-term outcomes for emancipating

Program			the program	Living Program	foster care youth
Jones (2013) Residential Education Facility	Relationship-Based Model	Social Connections	Quantitative survey identifying types of social support and the effects on long-term outcomes	97 former foster youth discharged from a residential education facility	Findings suggest that social connectedness does support resiliency in foster care youth's transition to independent living
Jones and Morris (2012)	Youth Development	Social Connections	Systematic review detailing risk and resiliency factors in the psychological adjustment foster care youth	15 research articles were reviewed and findings synthesized	Across the studies included in this review, it was found that the ability for youth to form positive connections with a caring adult was associated with higher resiliency in their transition to adulthood
Day, Somers, Darden, and Yoon (2014) Schools in Michigan	Youth Development	Resource Coordination	Qualitative survey methodology describing	249 School-based behavioral specialist in Michigan	A lack of cross-system communication may be contributing to the difficulties programs and practitioners experience when working with emancipating foster care youth
Crawford, Tilbury, Creed, and Buys (2011)	Youth Development	Resource Coordination	Mixed-method project that studied career development for foster care youth	25 youth emancipating from care and 14 caseworkers in Australia	It was found that foster care youth were interested in career development, but that the "acute casework" approach correlated with lower achievement of career goals.

Osterling and Hines (2006) Advocates to Successful Transition to Independence	Relationship-Based Model	Resource Coordination Independent Living Skills	Mixed-method exploratory study that evaluated a mentoring program for adolescent foster youth.	52 foster care youth in the Advocates to Successful Transition to Independence program	The results of this study indicate that the presence of a mentor had a positive effect on long-term outcomes for youth transitioning out of foster care
Gilligan (1999) Mentorship Programs	Relationship-Based Model Youth Development	Social Connections	Case study evaluations that explored the effect of a mentor relationship as youth transition from foster care.	Case studies from various mentorship programs, all identifying information is confidential.	The results suggest that mentoring youth according to their personal interests does have a positive effect on their long-term outcomes.
Wade and Dixon (2006) Department of Education and Skills	Youth Development	Independent Living Skills	Quantitative exploratory study measuring career and housing outcomes for youth transitioning from foster care	106 youth leaving care in England	The results assert that outcomes were generally poor, but that interventions that improved career planning had a positive impact on the youths' overall mental health and well-being.
Kirven (2000)	Integrative Model	Social Connections	Qualitative and exploratory study utilizing case scenarios	Case studies of youth transitioning out of foster care provided confidentially	The findings report a strong correlation between the integrative-holistic model, strengths-based social connections, and positive outcomes for the youth.